

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MILI PFOR KS

SUBJECT: REACTION TO HOLLINGSWORTH DEPARTURE

1. RETIREMENT OF US-ROK I CORPS COMMANDER LTG JAMES HOLLINGS-WORTH HAS BEEN MAJOR NEWS STORY AND LOCAL TOPIC OF DISCUSSION FROM TIME GENERAL'S REPLACEMENT ANNOUNCED JANUARY 24 UNTIL HIS DEPARTURE FEBRUARY 12. MEDIA HAS GIVEN ALMOST DAILY COVERAGE TO HOLLINGSWORTH PRE-DEPARTURE ACTIVITIES INCLUDING NUMEROUS TESTIMONIAL DINNERS BY ROK POLITICAL FIGURES AND CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS, SERIES OF MILITARY FAREWELL CEREMONIES, AND CALL ON PRESIDENT PARK AT WHICH PRESIDENT EXPRESSED GRATITUDE TO GENERAL AND DECORATED HIM FOR "EXCEPTIONALLY OUTSTANDING" SERVICE IN KOREA, PARTICULARLY HIS CONTRIBUTION TO FORWARD DEFENSE POSTURE.

2. PRESS HAS PAINTED PICTURE OF HOLLINGSWORTH AS POSSESSING UNIQUE BLEND OF COMBAT EXPERIENCE, TOUGHNESS AND SKILL NEEDED AT CRITICAL TIME IN ROK HISTORY. EDITORIALS HAVE PRAISED HIM FOR HIS "CORRECT" PERCEPTION OF NORTHERN THREAT, UNDERSTANDING OF NATURE OF COMMUNISM, AND CONSEQUENT FORMULATION OF SHORT-WAR STRATEGY WHICH WAS IMPORTANT IN DETERING NORTHERN ATTACK IN THE POST-VIETNAM PERIOD.

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3. PAPERS HAVE ALSO REPORTED WIDESPREAD SPECULATION AND SUBSEQUENT U.S.G. DENIAL THAT HOLLINGSWORTH WAS REPLACED FOR EXCEEDING HIS AUTHORITY IN MAKING HARD-LINE STATEMENTS WARNING NORTH KOREA AGAINST ATTACK. CHOSUN ILBO EDITOR-IN-CHIEF WROTE FEBRUARY 3 THAT THERE ARE GROUNDS SUPPORTING STORY OF EARLY RETIREMENT FOR POLITICAL REASONS AND EVEN COMPARED CASE TO RETIREMENT OF GENERAL MACARTHUR. CHOSUN ILBO ALSO TOOK OCCASION TO JUXTAPOSE ITS PRAISE OF EXPERIENCED COMMUNIST FIGHTER WITH STRONG CRITICISM OF U.S. RELIANCE ON INTELLECTUALS AND COMPUTERS IN FORMATION POLICY TO DEAL WITH COMMUNISTS, LEADING TO FAILURES SUCH AS VIETNAM AND DANGEROUS POLICY OF DETENTE.

4. IN PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS BOTH IN SEOUL AND PROVINCES ROKS HAVE VOICED SIMILAR PRAISE OF HOLLINGSWORTH BUT HAVE ALSO QUESTIONED U.S. AS TO ANY POLITICAL MOTIVATION FOR REPLACING HOLLINGSWORTH: DENIALS OF STORIES OFTEN WERE MET WITH SKEPTICISM.

5. COMMENT: ATTENTION BEING GIVEN TO REPLACEMENT OF COLORFUL AND RESPECTED GENERAL, SUSPICION OF POLITICAL MOTIVATION, AND CRITICISM OF DETENTE IS REFLECTION OF CONTINUING PUBLIC EDGINESS OVER U.S. COMMITMENT TO DEFEND ROK.

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